

(213)

November 10, 1962
DECLASSIFIED

MEMORANDUM FOR: F - Mr. Manning

SUBJECT: STAR Editorial - November 9

Reacting to the STAR editorial of last night, let's keep in mind that two quite dramatic things have happened in the past few days:

1. The Russians have removed their missiles; they have let us look at them; and not many people can be in doubt about it.

2. The President has demonstrated that when the chips are down he will act (a) to protect our security and (b) to avoid war. This is exactly what the public wants the President to do and they ask no more. The election results confirm this view.

I believe the end result is that people do not care about exactly how it is all done -- whether there is on-site inspection or UN inspection or some acceptable substitute -- as long as the thing is done. Another result is we do not have to be as jumpy about the political charges of a "backdown". Homer was retired by the people of Indiana and the President is very hard to attack right now.

It now seems that what we should have been doing for the past twenty-four hours or so is to ease off the specific condition of on-site inspection -- to begin to suggest that when we ran into obstacles, we began to look for some equally acceptable method of verification, etc.

If it was planned deliberately, yesterday, for Linc to talk to the Russians, that's another matter. But if he is talking to the general public, then I think we should start shading off as demurely as possible and sounding as though we were being madly realistic about it.

Harlan Cleveland

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The Secretary

The Under Secretary

G - Mr. Johnson

IO:TWilson:mtb

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY

DATE 4-6-88

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A-15

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1962

Let's Stop Kidding

The time has come in the Cuban business when we should stop trying to kid ourselves—not to mention other people. We, meaning our own Government, might be able to fool the American people. But no one else will be fooled.

A spokesman for the State Department, who presumably has to say what he's told to say, announced in very firm terms yesterday afternoon that there still must be "verification on the ground" of the withdrawal of Soviet ballistic missiles from Cuba. On the day before, however, a spokesman for the Defense Department said that Russian ships were leaving Cuba with the offensive missiles aboard. Mr. Khrushchev (in a jovial mood in Moscow) confirmed this on Wednesday. And the Wednesday word in Washington was that the Soviet missile-carrying ships would be "contacted" by United States ships at sea. This "contact" might consist of an actual search a quick look from alongside, or possibly a helicopter scrutiny. No questions on these points were being answered at the Pentagon, and our Defense officials conveyed the impression

that the "best" word of a "no" was back on the ground. Under United States supervision has been filed and announced. If one takes seriously yesterday's pronouncement from the State Department—which we do not—will be done to verify the removal of missiles through on-the-ground inspection in Cuba. Will every dock, cave and cranny be searched for hidden missiles? Will nuclear warheads, easily concealed, be tracked down? Will the Russian-furnished jet bombers be recovered and shipped out of Cuba? That's not be ridiculous. And let's stop kidding the American people.

Fidel Castro has won his point. There is not going to be any real verification on the ground in Cuba. And the pretense that this country can ascertain the score in Cuba by taking a quick look at Russian ships at sea is the kind of fairy tale that should be saved for small children. They might believe it. But it is not for adults.

With all this, it assuredly does not follow that the United States has taken a licking in the Cuban affair. On balance, the converse probably is true. Castro, even though he may have managed to hang on to a few missiles, nuclear warheads and jet bombers, is no serious threat to the United States. He may not know much, but he knows this much, and none of us need lie awake nights worrying about a military menace from Havana. It simply isn't there.

There is also ample reason to doubt that Mr. Khrushchev still thinks there are any bets to be won by him in Castro's Cuba. Our guess is that Mr. Khrushchev on this point, has had it. And we would like to think that he had his right hand on the Bible when he said on Wednesday in Moscow: "Who won? Who lost? Human reason won. Mankind won. If we [the Kremlin] had not shown reason we would not be here at this [Moscow] reception, and the American elections might not have taken place either."

One would like to believe this and the inferences that could be drawn from it. The fact is, however, that Mr. Khrushchev now says that some 40 missiles have been withdrawn from Cuba, although it was only a few days ago that Mr. Gromyko, even after the evidence of the photographs, was solemnly assuring the President that there were no such missiles in Cuba. To such this, in the nicest possible way, this country was being kidded by the Russians. With considerable regret, we feel compelled to suggest that the American people are also being kidded by their own governmental spokesmen.